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LETTER DATED 11 NOVEMBER 1996 FROM THE PERMANENT OBSERVER OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Pursuant to Article 54 of the Charter of the United Nations, I have the honour to forward herewith a letter addressed to you by the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity, together with the communiqué of the Fourth Extraordinary Session of the Central Organ of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, held at Addis Ababa on 11 November 1996.

(Signed) Ibrahim SY
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of
the Organization of African Unity
to the United Nations

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Annex

Letter dated 11 November 1996 from the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that an extraordinary session of the central Organ of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution at ministerial level was held today, 11 November 1996, at Addis Ababa to consider the current crisis in the Great Lakes region with special reference to eastern Zaire.

Also participating in the session were the ministers and other representatives of countries of the Great Lakes region, as well as representatives of the neighbouring countries of Zaire.

At the end of the meeting, a communiqué was issued, a copy of which is transmitted herewith (see appendix).

In transmitting the text of the communiqué I should like to draw your particular attention to paragraphs 6 to 10, which deal specifically with the issue of the proposed international force. Most specifically, your attention is drawn to Africa's disposition and readiness to contribute forces to the proposed international force. As you will note from the communiqué, in order for African countries to be able to do so and to ensure effective participation by Africa in the proposed force, financial, logistical and material support should be provided on a very reliable, dependable and sustainable basis.

I should, therefore, like to request you to have the text of this communiqué circulated as a document of the United Nations Security Council. Furthermore, I should like to emphasize that we share the concern for an urgent deployment of the proposed force. In this connection, I shall be consulting with a number of countries towards the attainment of this objective.

In the meantime, the Foreign Ministers of Cameroon, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe have been mandated to work in close cooperation with the Secretary-General of OAU with respect to this issue and I wish to assure you that we all remain available for consultation as you deem fit.

(Signed) Salim Ahmed SALIM

Appendix

[Original: English and French]

Communiqué issued after the fourth extraordinary session of the Central Organ of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution at the level of ministers

Addis Ababa, 11 November 1996

The Central Organ of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution held, at the request of the Government of Algeria, its fourth extraordinary session today, 11 November 1996, at the level of Ministers for Foreign Affairs. Mr. Ferdinand Leopold Oyono, Minister of External Relations of the Republic of Cameroon, chaired the session. Mr. Meles Zenawi, Prime Minister of the federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, addressed the session on the outcome of the Nairobi Regional Summit on the crisis in eastern Zaire, held on 5 November 1996. The countries involved in the Arusha peace process, including those of the Great Lakes region, as well as the other countries bordering Zaire, also attended the meeting at the invitation of the Secretary-General.

The session considered the report of the Secretary-General on the current crisis in the Great Lakes region, with special reference to eastern Zaire.

The Central Organ:

1. Expresses its grave concern at the humanitarian tragedy unfolding in eastern Zaire with its far-reaching implications for peace, security and stability in the region, and appeals for an immediate cessation of hostilities and for restraint;

2. Underscores the urgent need to provide humanitarian relief and facilitate the voluntary return of the refugees to their countries of origin;

3. Fully supports and endorses the decisions and approach taken by the regional leaders at their meeting of 5 November 1996 in Nairobi on the crisis in eastern Zaire. The Central Organ considers the Summit decisions as embodied in the press statement as a solid framework for defusing the crisis;

4. Expresses its commitment to the unity, cohesion and respect of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Zaire in accordance with the OAU Charter and in particular the Cairo Declaration of 1964 on territorial integrity and inviolability of national boundaries as inherited at independence. It also calls for non-intervention and an end to cross-border incursions. The Central Organ reaffirms the inalienable rights of all peoples within the internationally recognized territorial boundaries as stipulated in the OAU Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and other international conventions relevant to the right of citizenship and nationality;

5. Underscores the position that the setting up of a neutral force as recommended by the Nairobi Summit would have been the most effective manner of facilitating the creation of safe corridors and temporary sanctuaries and ensuring an effective African contribution to such a force. It regrets that the Security Council did not fully take into account this particular recommendation of the Nairobi Summit;

6. Nonetheless, given the decision by the United Nations Security Council to create a multinational force, the Central Organ considers that African participation in such a force is pivotal;

7. Given the resource constraints that would clearly face African contributors to the force, the Central Organ underscores the need for the Security Council and the international community at large to create a mechanism which would ensure an effective African participation. This means that financial, logistic and material resources should be provided on a very reliable, dependable and sustainable basis;

8. On the understanding that resources would be made available, the Central Organ appeals to all the African countries in a position to do so to contribute contingents to the proposed multinational force;

9. Underscores the need for clarity of the mandate of the proposed force, which should inter alia facilitate the provision of humanitarian relief assistance and the return of the refugees to Rwanda. It also stresses the importance of the proposed force being neutral. It urges a speedy deployment of the force and requests all parties concerned to extend maximum cooperation;

10. Requests the OAU Secretary-General to enter into consultation with all concerned, especially with the United Nations Secretary-General, with a view to ensuring an effective African participation in the force;

11. Reiterates the crucial importance of separating the intimidators from the bona fide refugees, and requests the Security Council to consider this issue as a vital component of the efforts to ensure the safe and voluntary return of the refugees to Rwanda and create conditions conducive to the resolution of the crisis;

12. Underscores the importance and urgency of finding a durable and lasting solution to the crisis in the Great Lakes region and in this context reaffirms its support for the convening as soon as possible of the International Conference on Peace, Security and Stability in the Great Lakes Region as already agreed upon by OAU;

13. Mandates the Minister of External Relations of Cameroon (representative of the current Chairman), the Foreign Minister of Ethiopia (representative of the past Chairman of OAU) and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Zimbabwe (representative of the next Chairman of OAU) in cooperation with the Secretary-General of OAU, to follow the implementation of the outcome of this session and, in particular, the issue of the proposed force.